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Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 5

QUESTION OF THE REALIZATION IN ALL COUNTRIES OF THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS CONTAINED IN THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND IN THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, AND STUDY OF SPECIAL PROBLEMS WHICH THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FACE IN THEIR EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THESE HUMAN RIGHTS

Written statement submitted by Pax Romana, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[26 March 1998]

GE.98-11636 (E)

1. The seventh summit of the Group of 15 (G-15), held in Kuala Lumpur between 3 and 5 November 1997, came closer than ever to articulating an organized sense of dissent against the worldwide consensus on globalization orchestrated by the IMF and the World Bank. The G-15 represents the broad range of interests articulated internationally by the Group of 77, in contrast to the grouping of industrialized countries (G-7).

2. Some speeches delivered by high-level diplomats at the meeting were cautious regarding the structural adjustment policies of the IMF and World Bank. Malaysia complained that it had for many years contributed to the achievement of the highest growth rates in the world, but it had all been brought to nought by currency speculation which set back "decades of sweat, toil and tears" in a matter of months. The need to put an end to the grey area of the rules of the game of currency traders in international financial regulations was commonly highlighted. It is essential to develop strategies to protect developing countries from the whims of the market and exchange rate fluctuations among the major currencies. Furthermore, in later deliberations, it was proposed that the G-15 establish a forum of Finance Minsters and Central Bank Governors to consider the questions arising from currency turbulence.

3. The outcome statement called upon the IMF and the World Bank to "study recent developments in currency markets with a view to appropriately regulating them, in order to make them more open and transparent". The above-mentioned working group of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors will draft a set of proposals for the IMF with a view to their being really implemented. This is the first time in history that developing countries are establishing structures for coordination and negotiation to protect their economies from the abuses of speculators.

4. A recent case is to be considered. Developed countries' Governments have had to come to the rescue of East Asian merchant and commercial banks by agreeing to finance the bail-out from the situation resulting from the latest financial turbulence. In order to achieve this objective, the G-7 national treasuries were obliged to take on large amounts of public debt. In other words, the beneficiaries of the bail-out are also the underwriters of the public debt operation required to finance their own bail-out. An absurd situation: G-7 Governments are financing their own indebtedness. The real beneficiaries of the East Asian crisis and the restructuring that will follow will be international investors; both the developed industrial economies and the developing economies face slower growth.

5. Another important question is the weakening of the welfare State all over the world. On 22 February 1998, the G-7 ministers requested a plan for reform of the labour markets and their rules. Nevertheless, the question is even more worrying in developing countries since the security of the poor and economically vulnerable are directly affected. That is the case of food distribution.

6. Food subsidies have come under attack in recent years from proponents of structural adjustment. Food subsidies are seen as being excessive and reducing them is viewed as a way of controlling the fiscal deficit. Food security has a high priority in most developing countries. It is self-evident

for Pax Romana that food policies should identify the most effective ways of providing food to those who need it and not to merely aim at cutting back Government expenditure.

7. Hunger and malnutrition are prevalent on a mass scale in several developing areas of the world, where deaths from starvation occur every day. Average cereal consumption per capita is low and has declined since the 1950s in some overcrowded areas and countries. With the introduction of structural adjustment strategies, the public food distribution systems are being redefined by introducing a distinction between below-poverty-line and above-poverty-line groups as well as by reducing the amount of monthly food allocations for the poor. The criteria of the new systems are hypothetical and their application unfairly excludes families from food distribution supplies because: (a) they are based upon the level of income, not upon the level of expenses of a familial group. A single medical emergency may push a whole family over into debt or hunger; and (b) the poverty line is far lower than before. The result is the weakening of the welfare State in one of the most essential aspects of life: the right to adequate food.

8. The World Trade Organization (WTO) has become since 1995, an international body with binding supranational powers and is outside all democratic or parliamentary control. When a State's request for membership is accepted, the WTO can declare national acts (regarding labour, health and environment) contrary to the free market and force the State to abolish them.

9. Moreover, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is hosting negotiations of one of the bases of the economy of the coming century: Multilateral Agreement on Investment, which is to be signed in 1998. In its draft form, the Agreement grants preference to investors rather than to Governments. A Government's adherence to article VIII of the IMF, which prescribes the freeing of capital flows in countries, is a first step on the path to loss of authority which seems to be continuing by means of the MAI.

10. Thus, Pax Romana entirely supports the appointment of a special rapporteur to encourage the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights and, specifically, to study:

(a) The effects of international financial speculation on human rights standards;

(b) The process of weakening of the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights as a result of multilateral structural adjustment policies;

(c) The possible effects of the draft Multilateral Agreement on Investment and the resolutions of WTO on the enjoyments of those essential rights.

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Fifty-fourth session
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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Joint written statement submitted by the Women's International Democratic Federation, World Confederation of Labour, World Federation of Democratic Youth, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status: African Commission of Health and Human Rights Promoters, Change, Indigenous World Association, International Association for the Defence of Religious Liberty, International Association of Democratic Lawyers, International Federation of Women in Legal Careers, International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples, North-South XXI, Pax Christi International, Pax Romana, United Towns Agency for North-South Cooperation, Worldview International Foundation, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status: Centre Europe-Tiers Monde, International Educational Development Inc., International Federation of Free Journalists, Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amité entre les peuples, World Organization Against Torture, non-governmental organizations in roster consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[30 March 1998]

Statement on Iran

1. A review of the situation in Iran in the past year shows that despite tremendous propaganda, the human rights situation has not improved and in some areas it has, in fact, deteriorated. The State media has reported 200 executions in public in 1997, twice the number in the previous year, 138 of which during Khatami's tenure. The real number of secret executions is much higher.

2. At least seven persons, four of them women, have been stoned to death in public since Khatami's presidency. On 26 October 1997, the Associated Press reported the stoning to death of six persons, in Sari, the capital of northern province of Mazandaran. The stoning to death of six persons in one day is unprecedented.

3. As the United Nations Special Representative on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran pointed out in his report to the General Assembly, October 1997 (A/52/472), this savage form of atrocity continues in Iran unabated. Citing article 82 (b) of the regime's law that sanctions it, he described such a sentence as a cruel inhuman or degrading punishment.

4. Khatami's ascension to power has made no difference in the daily plight of Iranian women. The Iranian regime's refusal to join the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on the pretext that "the Convention's underlying spirit" which calls for equality of men and women is against the fundamentals of the regime, vividly shows this regime's incompatibility with international mechanisms and norms. This decision was made by the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution headed by Khatami.

5. Agence France Presse (AFP) reported on 30 November 1997 that Iranian security forces arrested a large number of women for improper veiling or attires that were not compatible with Islamic regulations. The AFP correspondent witnessed in northern Tehran security forces forcing many young women into patrol cars.

6. In March 1998, in a 395 page document released by the court of Berlin 11 months after the conclusion of the "trial, which lasted for three and a half years, the judges concluded that the leadership of the Iranian Government ... not only approves the execution of terrorist assassinations abroad but carries them out against individuals who are considered non-desirable only because of their political positions."

7. The mullahs have stepped up their activities to export fundamentalism and terrorism. The Associated Press reported on 9 January 1998 that the assassination of dissidents has increased in recent months. According to the National Council of Resistance of Iran, 24 dissidents have been assassinated during Khatami's presidency. In early February 1998, the mullahs' regime gathered its agents from 80 countries under the guise of the Global Assembly of Ahl Al-Bait, and Khamenei, Khatami and Rafsanjani met them.

8. On the ninth anniversary of the fatwa against Salman Rusdie, in an unprecedented onslaught since the issuing of the death sentence, the regime's most senior officials, including the Prosecutor General, the Speaker of Majlis (Parliament), the Foreign Ministry spokesman and the Revolutionary Guards Corps reiterated the need to carry out the fatwa. The head of 15th of Khordad Foundation, that has placed $2.5 million bounty on Rushdie's head, announced that the bounty could increase "according to the time when the fatwa is carried out." He reiterated that all of the regime's leaders, including Mohammad Khatami, have agreed on the need to carry out the verdict against Salman Rusdie.

9. Despite pervasive repression, popular uprisings, student demonstrations and labour strikes against the regime as a whole, have shown a dramatic increase in recent months, signalizing an explosive state of affairs. Two major demonstrations in the east and west of Tehran, respectively on 19 August and 19 November, were brutally suppressed and scores of people were arrested. Their fate remains unknown.

10. Extensive clashes between the Revolutionary Guards Corps and the people in Neyriz (Fars Province) on 15 August, and in Isfahan (Central Iran) on 7, 11 and 12 November and Anar (Kerman Province south of Iran) from 30 January to 1 February 1998, have taken place. Demonstration of 2,500 students on 7 November in Kazeroon University, sit-in by more than 2,000 students on 10 and 11 September in Mashhad's Ferdowsi University, strike by 10,000 workers at the Tehran National Industry in late January, and by thousands of workers at Jahan-Chit factory in Karaj on 28 December were suppressed by the Revolutionary Guards Corps and agents of the Ministry of Intelligence.

11. On 4 January 1998, following an anti-government demonstration by more than 3,000 Tehran University students, the mullahs' Ministry of Intelligence arrested at least 116 of them. Their fate is also unknown.

12. Ascension to presidency of Khatami, who was a Khomeini regime's minister for 10 years, has not made any difference on the human rights situation. The events of recent months clearly prove this reality. To this effect, the regime's president refrained from meeting in Tehran Ms. Mary Robinson, the High Commissioner for Human Rights because she wanted to raise her concerns on the human rights situation in Iran.

13. Condemnation of violation of human rights in Iran and its worsening trend which has been stipulated in resolution 52/142 of the United Nations General Assembly of 12 December 1997, and resolution of the European Parliament of 20 February 1998 illustrate the international concern over this matter.

14. The experience of the past decade and the regime's complete ignoring of 41 resolutions of condemnation by various organs of the United Nations prove the fact that pinning any hope on reform by this regime is nothing but a mirage and does not help the human rights situation in Iran at all. Such a placating policy only emboldens the mullahs in continuing suppression and terrorism.

15. The only appropriate response of the Commission to the behaviour of the mullahs' regime vis-à-vis the most fundamental rights of the Iranian people and international rules and regulations of human rights is to adopt a firm policy without any political and economic considerations. This would entail passing a strong resolution which includes the above-mentioned cases of violations of human rights in Iran.